

25X1A

Approved For Release 2001/03/05 : CIA-RDP82-00457R006200

# INFORMATION REPORT

CD NO.

COUNTRY: Indochina

DATE DISTR. 10 Nov 56

SUBJECT: The Vietnamese National Army

NO. OF PAGES 5

PLACE 25X1A  
ACQUIRED

NO. OF ENCLS.  
(LISTED BELOW)

DATE OF INFO.

SUPPLEMENT TO  
REPORT NO.

25X1X

The following are translated extracts from a treatise on Viet Nam and the Defense of Southeast Asia, privately prepared in August 1950 by Dr. Phan Huy Quat, former Vietnamese Minister of Defense. This treatise was written for the information and use of the leaders of the National Popular Party in Hanoi.\*

1. Present State of French Forces. According to the French General Staff, the expeditionary corps maintained by the French Government in Indochina is 150,000 strong.... A good proportion of the troops consists of Vietnamese mercenaries, legionaries and colonial recruits, all of whom are uninspired by any ideological concept. This heterogeneous corps is equipped with arms which, in comparison with those of Communist armies such as we have seen in Korea, are worn and obsolescent. Armored vehicles in particular have passed their useful stage. The air force in Indochina... lacks fast modern machines and aerodromes for the handling of large aircraft. And finally, with 2,400 kilometers of coast to defend and with a Communist Hainan at our gates, the French naval forces are almost insignificant.
2. Beginnings of the Vietnamese Army. What then has France done in order to build up a Vietnamese Army? Under the Central Provisional Government of Viet Nam, set up in June 1943, there was created a "Mission Francaise d'Organisation" for this purpose. But up to July 1950, Viet Nam had available a regular army of only 7 battalions (roughly 5,600 men), plus 25,000 civil guards. The officer cadres are lamentably insufficient. One officers' training school was set up at Hue, and this has produced so far two batches totalling 150 officers. Together with the Vietnamese officers formerly belonging to the French Army, we thus have in all about 300. No college has ever been started in order to form specialists in radio communications, workshops, engineering, artillery, or armored vehicles. It is hardly necessary to say that no effort has ever been made to create a Vietnamese Air Force and Navy.

~~CLASSIFICATION CONFIDENTIAL/CONTROL - U.S. OFFICIALS ONLY~~

[illegible]

Document No. 003  
 No Change in Class. ☒  
☐ Reassigned  
 Class. Changed To: TS S C  
 Auth.: ED 70-2  
 Date: 1978 26 By: pr3  
 82-00457B006200100003-3

CONFIDENTIAL/CONTROL - U.S. OFFICIALS ONLY

25X1A

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

- 2 -

3. The 30,000 men who constitute our so-called National Army are seriously lacking in ammunition, automatic arms, motor transport and means of communication. There is no artillery. The faulty system of recruitment and the absence of any intelligence organization have laid the army open to penetration by the Communists.
4. Apart from some 3,000 civil guards (Dao Chinh Doan) who are controlled by the Regional Administration of North Viet Nam, the Vietnamese forces are all at the disposal of the French High Command. It is interesting to note that this so-called National Army is national only as regards its expenditure; for all costs of personnel and material are borne exclusively out of the Vietnamese national budget.
5. Inadequacy of Present Forces. Thus for the defense of this portion of Southeast Asia against 200,000 Chinese Communist troops on the frontier, according to unofficial computations, and 250,000 Viet Minh troops within the country, there exists only a mixed force of 130,000 men with mediocre equipment and arms. It must be borne in mind also that for the past four months, the Viet Minh has been sending their young men to the Chinese border for military training, so that the plan for general mobilization decreed by the Ho Chi Minh Government is being put into rapid effect. More troops are needed on this side. The French cannot increase the number of their fighting units, because of their commitments at home; and yet with the "Mission Francaise d'Organisation", the Vietnamese Army is being created at the rate of only 4 battalions a year. There is only one solution to this dangerous situation; to organize the mass of the Vietnamese people into a National Army which would have for incentive the defense of an independent homeland.
6. Requisites for an Effective Army. The first task of any National Army would be the internal pacification of the country. In order to achieve this with success, we must postulate:
  - a) That the army must be entirely Vietnamese. This will have the psychological effect of neutralizing the Viet Minh propaganda, which constantly denounces our present government as a tool of the French, "colonialists." It will give us a great advantage in the gathering of military intelligence.
  - b) That we adopt against the Viet Minh similar tactics to their own. Our army must above all possess an infantry strength of 500,000 men, supported by sufficient artillery. Air bombings here are rarely effective, inasmuch as they do most damage to the civilian population, who have already suffered enough.
  - c) That the army operate in close collaboration with the population. It would not be the army of any specific government, but the army of the people, fighting for liberty.
7. General Mobilization. In order to cope with the critical situation of the hour, the government should consider the general mobilization of all citizens from 18 to 40 years old, and of technical experts from 18 to 60. At the same time, we should decree the mobilization of all industrial and agricultural resources for the purpose of national defense. Mobilization would solve the problem of man-power and would reduce military expenditure to about one-quarter of its present figure.

CONFIDENTIAL/CONTROL - U.S. OFFICIALS ONLY

CONFIDENTIAL/CONTROL - U.S. OFFICIALS ONLY

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

25X1A

- 3 -

8. Proposed Composition of Army. The infantry of 500,000 strong, would be divided into three groups, each with different but complementary attributions:
- a) The regular troops would number 150,000 men, formed into battalions and armed in modern style. These units would have a double assignment: to defend the frontiers and to destroy by mobile columns the strong concentrations of Communists within the country.
  - b) There would be 150,000 Civil Guards in the provinces. They would be raised on the spot and armed more lightly with rifles, grenades, stens, machineguns and mortars. Their role would be the protection of the civilian population and the neutralization of the armed groups of Viet Minh within their zone. The Civil Guard would offer a source of recruits for the regular army. When necessary, it could supplement the regular army in the defense of the territory against foreign aggression.
  - c) Finally, on the village level, all able-bodied men would form a home guard (corps d'auto-defense), the total of which, for the whole country, would be in the neighborhood of 200,000. These para-military formations would be armed only with rifles and grenades, and would ensure the protection of their villages without cost to the state.
9. In addition to the infantry, we should endeavor to create adequate artillery, engineer and armored units, and battalions of parachutists. Because of financial difficulties, Viet Nam could only aspire to a small nucleus of an air force, for transport, reconnaissance and bombing purposes; and to a small number of coastal and river naval vessels.
10. The various units of the fighting forces would have attached to them special officers to act in an advisory capacity on political, social and administrative matters. The duty of these officers would be to maintain the morale of the troops and to guide them away from Communist ideology through lectures, literature and individual example. They would see to the welfare of the troops. They would take charge of counterespionage within the military formations. They would make propaganda for the national cause among the civilian population... They would organize the provisional administration of reconquered territory...
11. Training. The training and instruction of the Vietnamese Infantry would be carried out by taking a quarter of the total forces at a time; the whole program to be completed within one year.
12. For the noncommissioned officers and men of the regular units, courses would last for three months; for officers, six months. The men would be given one month of barrack drill and then dispersed among hardened fighting units in order to gain experience in the field. If necessary they could be withdrawn to barracks subsequently, for further instruction. Officer-cadets would be given three months in the military academy and then sent to the front as deputies to officers in command of units.
13. The Civil Guard would receive training and instructions on similar lines, but the source for other ranks and noncommissioned officers would last for one month only, and for officers three months.

CONFIDENTIAL/CONTROL - U.S. OFFICIALS ONLY

CONFIDENTIAL/CONTROL - U.S. OFFICIALS ONLY

25X1A

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

- 4 -

14. In turn, the Civil Guards would undertake the training of the villagers in their sector; they would instruct them in the handling of simple arms in guerrilla tactics. In exchange, the villagers would help the Guards in patrolling and cleaning-up operations. Under this system there would be very little charge on the national budget and the nation would acquire a home guard, not of 200,000 men, but of several millions. Every able-bodied man would become a soldier against Communist aggression.
15. Equipment. Nevertheless, while the Vietnamese Government is capable of raising an army on these lines, it is quite incapable, with the financial means available in these beginnings of national independence, to provide the necessary equipment and arms. Yet the Communists are threatening to overrun us, and we are 20 million people resolved to fight for our liberty. We are certain that the democratic nations will help us, as they have helped China, Greece and Korea...
16. Conclusion. Against the vast ideological offensive of the Communists, we must stake patriotic sentiment and love of liberty... The Vietnamese people have shown through the ages what sacrifices it is prepared to make for the defense of its ancestral home... Today we turn to Bao Dai and will willingly follow him in the service of our nation, if he can obtain express and definite guarantee of our country's independence.
17. Up to the present, the French Government has followed a short-sighted and "wait-and-see" policy over Indochina. While Great Britain did not hesitate to give her colonies full independence in order to hold their friendship, France has merely given with one hand and taken back with the other. The Commission for the execution of the agreement of 3 March 1949 has procrastinated over the small questions of transfer of departments and has ended up with half-measures, while many other questions have been left pending.
18. Now, at the Pau Conference, where questions of vital importance are to be discussed, the French show no great desire to steer us away from deadlocks. While they declare to all the world that they have left us full liberty of action, they have never ceased to interfere in the affairs of our national government, either directly or indirectly.
19. During the years 1940-45, during the Japanese occupation and cut off from the Metropolis, the French regretted not having given the "ignorant natives" of Indochina wider powers and a higher culture... In order not to have more regrets, France should today have the courage to permit the formation of a genuinely national Vietnamese Government and of an army worthy of our new State.
20. It is often said that the French troops are indispensable for the defense of Indochina, that the departure of the French would leave the door open to the Communists; but we have tried to show in the pages above that this army alone would be incapable of stemming an all-out Communist offensive. Suppose also that a war in Europe were to oblige the French to withdraw their troops from this area. The urgent raising of a Vietnamese army would appear all the more necessary.
21. In order not to interfere with the present defense system of Viet Nam, we would propose that Vietnamese formations progressively replace the French formations now stationed here. The first step would be to take into the Vietnamese Army proper all Vietnamese troops at present with the "Forces de l'Union Francaise en Indochine." Subsequently, the French and African formations could be replaced by Vietnamese in monthly contingents of 15,000 men, as and when they become trained.

CONFIDENTIAL/CONTROL - U.S. OFFICIALS ONLY

25X1A

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

- 5 -

22. A strong and independent Viet Nam: this is the sole solution to the triple problem of internal pacification, defense of the frontiers against Communist aggression and the maintenance of the common interests which attach Viet Nam to France.

25X1A

- \* Comment. Phan Huy Quat resigned as Minister of Defense in the Dao Dai Government in March 1950. He is one of the sponsors of the National Popular Party (Phong Trac Quoc Gia Binh Dan), organized in June 1950 by leaders of the Dai Viet in an attempt to evolve from a select power clique to a popular large-scale political party.

CONFIDENTIAL/CONTROL - U.S. OFFICIALS ONLY